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Department of State

INCOMING TELEGRAM

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ACTION ARA-00

INFO OCT-00 COPY-01 ADS-00 AID-00 INR-10 EUR-00 SS-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-01 IO-15 NSC-01 NSAE-00 SY-05
HA-08 L-03 PM-08 PA-01 MCT-02 OMB-01 SAL-01
USIE-00 SP-02 SNP-01 PRS-01 /107 W
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R 231616Z AUG 83
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6328
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN
CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

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[redacted] SECTION 01 OF 02 BUENOS AIRES 05785

CINCSO FOR INTAFF; CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD; ROME ALSO FOR VATICAN OFFICE

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: SHUM, PINS, AR
SUBJECT: ANTI-AMNESTY MARCHES IN ARGENTINA

1. [redacted] SUMMARY: PROTEST MARCHES AGAINST THE AMNESTY LAW THAT THE MILITARY JUNTA IS EXPECTED TO PROMULGATE LATER THIS YEAR TOOK PLACE IN AT LEAST SEVEN ARGENTINE CITIES ON AUGUST 19, ALL WITHOUT INCIDENT. IN BUENOS AIRES, PERHAPS 25,000 TO 35,000 PEOPLE MARCHED TO THE CONGRESS BUILDING IN WHAT WAS PROBABLY THE LARGEST HUMAN RIGHTS DEMONSTRATION IN ARGENTINA'S HISTORY. PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE AND POLITICAL PARTIES ACROSS THE SPECTRUM PARTICIPATED. ALTHOUGH THE MARCH WAS WELL ORGANIZED AND IMPRESSIVE, THE TURNOUT MAY HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTING TO SOME OF THE ORGANIZERS WHO REPORTEDLY HOPED TO SEE AT LEAST 50,000 PEOPLE MARCH. NEVERTHELESS, THE MARCH WAS PROBABLY VIEWED AS A SUCCESS BY MOST OF ITS ORGANIZERS, AND IS ONE MORE INDICATION OF THEIR DETERMINATION TO OPPOSE THE AMNESTY LAW. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) ON AUGUST 19, MARCHES TO PROTEST THE AMNESTY LAW THAT THE MILITARY JUNTA IS EXPECTED TO PROMULGATE LATER THIS YEAR, TOOK PLACE FROM THE MOUNTAIN RESORT TOWN OF BARILOCHE TO THE CAPITAL OF BUENOS AIRES, INCLUDING THE MAIN CITIES SUCH AS CORDOBA, POSADAS, RESISTENCIA, ROSARIO, AND TUCUMAN. ALL MARCHES TOOK PLACE PEACEFULLY, WITH NO INCIDENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE REPORTED ANYWHERE.

3. (U) IN BUENOS AIRES, A CROWD ESTIMATED BY THE PRESS AT MORE THAN 35,000 PEOPLE MARCHED ALONG A FIFTEEN-BLOCK ROUTE TO THE DESERTED NATIONAL CONGRESS. THE MARCH WAS PROBABLY THE LARGEST HUMAN RIGHTS DEMONSTRATION IN ARGENTINA'S HISTORY, YET IT WAS POSSIBLY THE MOST PEACEFUL - DESPITE AN ALMOST TOTAL ABSENCE OF POLICE ALONG THE ROUTE. THE POLICE MADE A SHOW OF FORCE ONLY IN FRONT OF THE CONGRESS BUILDING, WHERE A LINE OF REGULAR POLICE ON THE SIDEWALK STRETCHED FOR A CITY BLOCK, BACKED UP BY TWO ARMORED CARS AND MORE POLICE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ENTRANCE TO CONGRESS. MOUNTED RIOT POLICE AND RESERVES IN ARMORED CARS WERE READY ON SIDE STREETS OUT OF SIGHT OF THE MARCHERS, BUT WERE NEVER NEEDED, AS THE MARCHERS POLICED THEMSELVES WITH THEIR OWN MARSHALS, SOME OF WHOM EVEN DIRECTED TRAFFIC WHEN POLICE DID NOT.

4. (U) IN AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF CROWD MANAGEMENT, THE EIGHT HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS ATTRACTED PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, ARRANGED THEM BY ORGANIZATIONAL GROUPS RANGING FROM STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS TO POLITICAL PARTIES, AND PRODUCED A PEACEFUL PROTEST THAT MADE ITS POINT WITHOUT EXCESS. LED BY NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER ADOLFO PEREZ ESQUIVEL AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS, THE MARCHERS' ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDED ALL THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES (PERONISTS, RADICALS, ETC.) AND MANY OF THE MINOR ONES, INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS. OTHER ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED IN THE KALEIDOSCOPIC PARADE OF MARCHERS WITH BANNERS, PLACARDS, AND ENLARGED PHOTOGRAPHS OF PEOPLE WHO DISAPPEARED DURING THE WAR AGAINST SUBVERSION WERE SUCH DIVERSE GROUPS AS THE ARGENTINE ASSOCIATION OF ACTORS, THE CENTER OF EXCOMBATANTS OF THE MALVINAS, AND EVEN A SMALL GROUP OF INCAPACITATED PEOPLE, SOME OF WHOM WERE WHEELED DOWN THE STREET ON STRETCHERS AND WHEELCHAIRS. GROUPS REPRESENTING PARAGUAYANS AND URUGUAYANS WHO DISAPPEARED IN ARGENTINA WERE ALSO PRESENT.

5. (U) ONCE THE MARCHERS REACHED THE SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE CONGRESS BUILDING, PEREZ ESQUIVEL READ A JOINT STATEMENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN WHICH THEY SAID THAT THEY "REJECT THIS DECREE OF IMPUNITY THAT IS AN ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS ON THE COUNTRY'S DEMOCRATIC FUTURE." NO LEADING PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES WERE SEEN DURING THE DEMONSTRATION, BUT TELEGRAMS OF SUPPORT FOR THE MARCH FROM RADICAL CANDIDATE RAUL ALFONSIN, PERONIST ANTONIO CAFIERO, AND INTRANSIGENT OSCAR ALENDE WERE READ TO THE CROWD. EVIDENTLY NO SUCH TELEGRAM WAS RECEIVED FROM THE LEADING PERONIST PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, ITALO ARGENTINO LUDER.

6. (U) DESPITE THE APPARENT UNITY OF PURPOSE THAT TRANSCENDED POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS, FACTIONALISM SURFACED. AS PEREZ ESQUIVEL BEGAN READING ALFONSIN'S TELEGRAM, THE PERONIST YOUTH CONTINGENT BEGAN BEATING ITS LARGE BASS DRUMS TO DROWN HIM OUT. IT TOOK THE INTERVENTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO, WHOSE

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny
Exemption(s): ____________
Declassify: ( ) In Part (X) In Full
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Date ________ Declassify on ________ Reason ____

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GROUP RECEIVED THE LARGEST OVATION BY FAR WHEN THE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS WERE INTRODUCED. TO SILENCE THE PERONISTS SHE ANGRILY SHOUTED OVER THE LOUD SPEAKERS THAT "THE MISSING PERSONS ARE FROM ALL THE PEOPLE," AND APPEALED TO THE CROWD TO LISTEN TO THE TELEGRAMS OF SUPPORT. THE CROWD SUPPORTED HER, AND THE PERONIST YOUTH GROUP QUIETED DOWN.

7. [redacted] COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE MARCH WAS IMPRESSIVE, THE EMBASSY OFFICER WHO OBSERVED IT BELIEVES THAT THE CROWD ESTIMATE WAS HIGH, AND THAT THE MARCHERS LACKED THE INTENSITY OF THE MARCHERS OF LAST DECEMBER'S ALL-PURPOSE DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, WHICH DREW OVER 100,000 PEOPLE. FURTHERMORE, ALTHOUGH THIS MAY HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST HUMAN RIGHTS DEMONSTRATION IN ARGENTINA'S HISTORY, AND SHOWS THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS ARE CORRECT WHEN THEY SAY THAT EACH OF THEIR MARCHES DRAWS MORE PEOPLE THAN THE PREVIOUS MARCH, THE TURNOUT PROBABLY WAS DISAPPOINTING TO SOME OF THE ORGANIZERS WHO REPORTEDLY HOPED TO SEE AT LEAST 50,000 PEOPLE MARCH (ESPECIALLY SINCE IT WAS HELD ON A FRIDAY EVENING WITH GOOD WEATHER). NEVERTHELESS, THE MARCH WAS PROBABLY VIEWED AS A SUCCESS BY MOST OF ITS ORGANIZERS, AND IS ONE MORE INDICATION OF THEIR DETERMINATION TO OPPOSE THE AMNESTY LAW TO THE MAXIMUM. THEY SELECTED THE CONGRESS AS THE SITE FOR THE CULMINATION OF THE MARCH (RATHER THAN THE MORE FAMOUS PLAZA DE MAYO) AS A SYMBOLIC INDICATION OF THEIR HOPE THAT NEXT YEAR'S FIRST CONGRESS IN EIGHT YEARS WILL REPEAL ANY AMNESTY LAW THAT THE CURRENT MILITARY GOVERNMENT PROMULGATES.
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